



MEDIA RELEASE

STATE OF TENNESSEE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION

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UPDATED FISH CONSUMPTION ADVISORIES ISSUED FOR TENNESSEE NEW MERCURY ADVISORIES ISSUED AS A RESULT OF 2006 AND 2007 SAMPLING

Nashville, Tenn. - The Department of Environment and Conservation has announced several modifications and additions to Tennessee's list of precautionary fish consumption advisories as a result of fish tissue levels that exceed the mercury trigger point of 0.3 parts per million.

"In 2007, the department issued several new mercury advisories based on a more stringent EPA trigger point and national studies that indicated mercury has potential neurological effects on children at lower levels than previously thought," said Paul Sloan, deputy commissioner of the Department of Environment and Conservation. "At the time, staff identified additional sites where more data was needed. This year's advisories reflect this new information."

The department has modified two existing advisories and issued five new advisories.

All the new advisories are precautionary. Unlike "do not consume" advisories that warn the general population to avoid eating fish from a particular body of water altogether, precautionary fish consumption advisories are directed at sensitive populations such as children, pregnant women, nursing mothers and those who eat fish frequently from the same body of water. Children and pregnant or nursing mothers should avoid eating the fish covered by the advisory. All others are cautioned to limit consumption to one meal per month.

On the Clinch River portion of Norris Reservoir in Anderson, Campbell, Claiborne, Grainger and Union Counties (not including the Powell River portion of the lake), the existing mercury precautionary advisory for largemouth bass issued in 2007 has been expanded to also include striped bass, smallmouth bass and sauger. Fish tissue sampling indicates these species also contain mercury levels above the trigger point of 0.3 ppm.

On the upper portion of Fort Loudoun Reservoir in Knox County (the area between Highway 129 and the forks of the river) the existing precautionary advisory for polychlorinated biphenyls has been modified to include mercury in largemouth bass. Mercury levels were not found to be above the trigger point in fish tissue samples taken from other parts of Fort Loudoun.

The following new advisories were issued:

- Duck River in Humphreys and Hickman Counties from the mouth of the Buffalo River (Mile 15.8) upstream to Interstate 40 (Mile 31.8). Precautionary advisory for largemouth, smallmouth and spotted bass.
- Sequatchie River in Marion County from the Tennessee River (Mile 0.0) upstream to State Highway 283 near Whitwell (Mile 22.1). Precautionary advisory for largemouth bass.
- French Broad River in Cocke County from Rankin Bridge (Mile 71.4) upstream to U.S. Highway 321, north of Newport (Mile 77.5). Precautionary advisory for largemouth bass.

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- Beech Lake in Henderson County. Precautionary advisory for largemouth bass.
- North Fork Forked Deer River in Dyer and Gibson Counties from the mouth of the Middle Fork Forked Deer River (Mile 17.6) upstream to State Highway 188 (Mile 23.6). Precautionary advisory for largemouth bass.

At several additional sites, 2007 fish tissue monitoring did not indicate a need to issue or modify an advisory. These rivers include the South Fork Holston River near Kingsport, the Mississippi River upstream of the present advisory near Memphis, the upper Duck River and upper Buffalo River. The department will continue to monitor fish tissue mercury concentrations in these areas.

“Eating fish with elevated levels of mercury is a risk Tennesseans can avoid,” said Division of Water Pollution Control Director Paul Davis. “Fishing advisories give fishermen and their families the information they need to make informed decisions about limiting their intake or avoiding fish from specific stream segments or bodies of water.”

The risk associated with these advisories pertains specifically to the consumption of fish. Swimming and wading in these waters or catching and releasing fish are activities that do not expose the public to an increased risk from mercury. In addition, fish are a healthy source of high-quality protein and essential nutrients. While contaminated fish should be avoided, fish remain an important component of a healthy diet.

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, mercury is a naturally occurring element that can be found throughout the environment. Forest fires and human activities, such as burning coal, some industrial processes and waste incineration, have caused the amount of mercury in parts of the environment to increase. The primary way people in the U.S. are exposed to mercury is by eating fish containing methylmercury, a toxic form of mercury that accumulates easily in organisms.

Where new advisories have been issued, the department will immediately begin the process of putting up signs at primary public access points. The Department of Environment and Conservation and the Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency will work in partnership on the collection and analysis of additional fish tissue samples this summer.

For a complete listing of Tennessee’s current fishing advisories plus additional information about the advisory issuance process, visit: www.tn.gov/environment/wpc/publications/advisories.pdf.

An EPA publication titled “*What You Need to Know About Mercury in Fish and Shellfish*” is available at www.epa.gov/waterscience/fish.

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